



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



M.J. "Mike" Foster
Governor

L. Hall Bohlinger
Secretary

For Immediate Release
September 19, 2003

Contact: Jean Kelly
Analisa Mir
Telephone: 225.219.3966

Environmental Notification

DEQ Reports Ozone Exceedances in the Baton Rouge Area

(Baton Rouge) -- The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is reporting that ozone levels in the Baton Rouge area are exceeding established federal standards. An increase in ozone levels may cause unhealthy air quality. As a result DEQ is urging nursing homes, day-care centers, hospitals and other institutions that provide services to those who may be affected by high ozone levels to take appropriate precautions. Active children and adults, the elderly, and individuals with respiratory illnesses such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion.

Ozone forms when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides react in the presence of sunlight and warm temperatures on days with little or no wind. While ozone in the earth's upper atmosphere helps protect us from the sun's harmful rays, ground-level ozone is potentially harmful to human health. Ozone levels above 124 parts per billion (ppb) are considered violations of the 1-hour federal standard set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As of 1 p.m., an ozone exceedance of 124 ppb was recorded at the Bayou Plaquemine air-monitoring site. At 2:00 p.m., the Bayou Plaquemine air-monitoring site had dropped to 105 ppb and the LSU air-monitoring site recorded an exceedance of 129 ppb.

While today's exceedance may push the area out of attainment with the established 1-hour federal standard, residents are encouraged to continue taking steps to prevent ozone formation and improve the overall air quality in the Baton Rouge nonattainment area that includes Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston and West Baton Rouge parishes.

Some of these steps are:

- Limit daytime driving and combine errands. Drive "emission-wise." Avoid prolonged idling and jackrabbit starts.
- Walk or ride a bicycle for short trips. Carpool or ride public transportation when it is possible.
- Refuel your vehicle in the cooler evening hours. Don't top off your tank. Make certain your gas cap seals tightly. If it is missing, buy a new one.
- Defer mowing grass until late evening or the next day.
- Avoid use of all gasoline-powered equipment such as chain saws, garden equipment, outboard motors, off-road or other recreational vehicles. If you must use such equipment, wait until after 7 p.m.
- Postpone chores that use oil-based paints, varnishes and solvents that produce fumes.
- If you must barbecue, use an electric starter instead of starter fluid.
- Maintain your vehicle to minimize pollutant emissions and maintain fuel efficiency.
- Conserve energy in your home.
- Spread the word by telling family, friends, co-workers and neighbors about ozone action days.

Additional information about current air quality in the Baton Rouge area is available online from the DEQ web site at www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/oz_today.asp, and www.brcleanair.org or by dialing 225/765-2660 for a recorded message from DEQ that provides a daily air quality reading and an ozone forecast.